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ONE WAY TO RUN A SCHOOL OR COLLEGE PAPER

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There are many kinds of school papers. Some are newspapers, published in newspaper form. Some are magazines; others are hybrids. Some are weekly; others are weakly.

Managers and editors of student publications are secured in various ways. In some cases they are, by some method, given their positions on a merit basis. In some they are elected by the students or by the various student organizations. In others they appear to be self-appointed.

Student bodies assume various attitudes toward their school papers. In some institutions the paper is generally thought to be a sheet well worth while. In others it is regarded as an unnecessary evil. In some it is a joke. There is usually a combination of attendant circumstances that conspire to bring about any of these conditions.

After this general statement regarding school papers I wish to explain briefly the method of conducting the school paper in the Missouri State Normal College at Warrensburg. This voluntary offering is not inspired by the thought that the method is something absolutely new under the sun, but by the observation that it is somewhat unique. Nor do I claim any credit for the plan. In fact, the necessity for operating it was thrust upon me by higher powers. When the thrusting was in progress I was not sure that it was practical or that it was sound educational policy. I do not guarantee that it would be found universally practical, and do not assert that there are reasons for its universal adoption. I simply desire to bear testimony to the fact that it works in one institution, and to express the belief that it can be defended as sound educational policy.

The explanation of the business management of the paper in question is not a long story. This important part of the work is

assumed by the administration of the school. The president finds an energetic, wide-awake young man, a student who would like to earn some money while in school, and appoints him business manager. The securing of advertising and of foreign subscriptions is turned over to the business manager. I say "foreign" subscriptions because in this institution the matriculation fee includes an amount sufficient to warrant sending the paper to every student. It thus becomes unnecessary to solicit subscribers among the students. The business manager is paid by the week or is given a percentage of the income from advertising and foreign subscriptions. It is the business of the manager to collect. The accounts of the paper, except the daybook kept by the manager, are kept by the president's clerical force. Bills are paid by the proper officer of the institution. The president lets the contract for the printing.

It is, however, with the work of preparing the copy and of editing the paper that we are concerned. Among the English courses there is offered a course in journalism. Students who have done a certain amount of work in college English composition and have developed the ability to write with a considerable degree of correctness are allowed to elect the course. Work done in the course satisfies further composition requirements. The class in journalism has charge of the school paper. It does all the work of news-gathering, news-writing, editorial-writing, copy-editing, proofreading, "making-up" the paper, etc. The class is organized each week with special reference to the week's issue of the paper. The necessary departmental editors are appointed and some students are detailed to "cover" certain things. The editorial column is emphasized.

Two primary aims are kept in mind. The first is to teach the clear, effective expression of thought, by exercising students in a practical type of English composition. The second is to give students a knowledge of the salient principles of journalistic writing and journalistic work. Two of the class hours each week are spent in studying the principles of journalism. Class discussions are based on the text used, *Essentials in Journalism*, by Harrington and Frankenberg. Oral class reports are based on the following: *The Newspaper*, Dibblee; *Newspaper Writing and Editing*, Bleyer;

The Writing of News, Ross; *Making a Newspaper*, Given; and periodic literature and reference works. The other two class hours each week are spent in the work of preparing the copy for the school paper.

Much is heard of the motivation of the work in the grades and in high school. If you want as complete motivation as is possible, tell students that what they write is to be printed and that hundreds of persons are to have the opportunity to read it. It will serve as a stimulus for students of any rank—grade, high school, or college. In such work, themes are not written to be blue-penciled and returned or placed on file. The teacher, if he will, may continue to wear out blue pencils to little avail. But the blue pencil in journalism presents the necessity for recasting for a very practical purpose—that of getting copy in a form acceptable for the press.

Inferior composition students are ordinarily not allowed to elect the course. What such students need is more drill in technical and detailed matters of composition. There is not time for this in a course in journalism. Students who are poor writers will profit little by work done in journalism. They are merely in the way and in a poor position to be helped. In a one-quarter course the class discussions must deal with the principles and methods of journalism. These are Greek to the student who has not learned how to express his ideas with some degree of ease and effectiveness. But the student who has learned to do this profits by journalistic writing as much or more than by any other type of composition. I sometimes feel that many students improve their style much more in journalism than would have been possible in any other form of exercise. When writing for the school paper the student writes *for* somebody and *to* somebody. With this in mind he is led to acquire the qualities of style that are essential in any kind of writing. He learns that clearness plus accuracy plus vivacity equals effectiveness. He must never forget that he must secure and hold the attention of the readers. In short, he must be interesting; otherwise he might as well not be at all. This quality, *interest*, is conditioned upon primal stylistic qualities. It is not necessarily mere cleverness. There is no journalistic alchemy which, objectively imposed, teaches one to turn the trick. Good journalism simply

involves writing timely discourse in a clear, orderly, concise, and therefore interesting, manner. What better aim can any teacher of composition anywhere or any when have?

No trouble has been encountered in having students enough elect the course to make it easy to "come out" each week with the paper. In order to keep the class down to about twenty it has been necessary several times to limit it. This situation obtains in a not overgrown normal college.

I have not answered such arguments as that it is not right to take over in such fashion a spontaneously misguided student activity—and I shall not.